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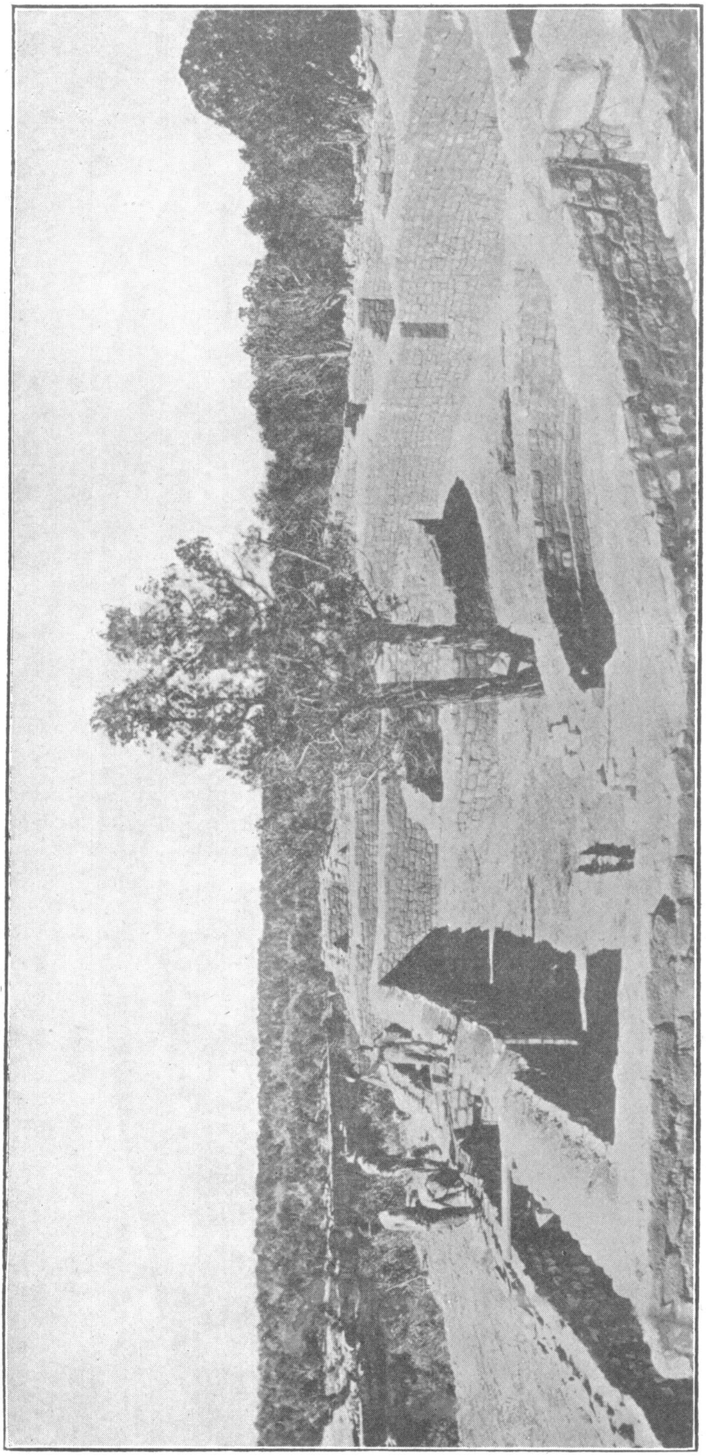
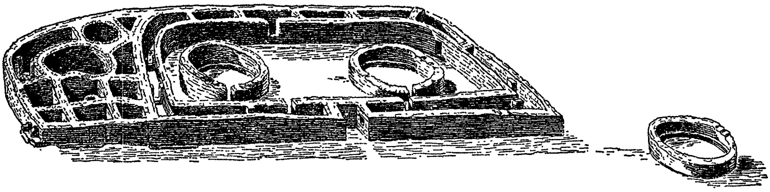


VIEW OF SUN TEMPLE FROM THE TOP OF A TREE EAST OF THE RUINS. Men cementing on the top of the east wall.



SKETCH OF THE PREHISTORIC SUN TEMPLE.

was believed that there were buildings of a different type of architecture hidden below these mounds, and it was recognized that it would be well to open up one of these mounds and examine its contents, in order to enlarge our knowledge of the culture of the prehistoric inhabitants of this region.

One of these mounds is situated on a commanding promontory across Cliff Canyon, opposite Cliff Palace, or between the former and a side branch following the same general direction. The stones artificially worked that covered the surface of this mound gave indications of important results, but the extent of the mound was hidden from view by a growth of cedar and other trees. A shallow excavation had been made at one point by "pot hunters," which revealed a section of wall and confirmed the belief that rooms were buried below the mound, but the fragment thus brought to light gave no indication of the extent, shape or purpose of the building to which they belonged.

The scientific field work on the park, in 1915, was entrusted to Dr. J. Walter Fewkes, ethnologist in the Bureau of American Ethnology, of the Smithsonian Institution, who had in previous years excavated and repaired Sprucetree House and Cliff Palace. The plan of work was a complete excavation of the mound, repair and study of the building, if any within it, and an investigation of its character and purposes. A report of this work has just been made to the Secretary of the Interior in which a popular exposition of the discoveries is treated. The statements made in this report indicate that this building belongs to an architectural type hitherto unknown in the Mesa Verde National Park, and differs from any formerly described. Its ground plan is well compared to a letter D, the straight side or south wall overlooking the point of a promontory measuring 121.7 feet from east to west; the curved portion being approximately 340 feet, while the breadth is about 64 feet. A marked feature in form which strikes one at first sight is the remarkable unity in its construction, the fine masonry of the walls and their massive character. Although apparently constructed in two sections at different times, it is evident that this huge, mysterious structure is a unit and followed a plan that was thought out before the foundations were laid, the massive walls being completed without essential modification. The building was not made up of rooms patched one on the other, from time to time, as is generally the case with cliff dwelling architecture.

A PREHISTORIC SUN TEMPLE

In his official report the author after considering various details takes up three of the many questions ordinarily asked by visitors, viz.: What is the age of the building, the kinship of the builders and the purpose of its construction. There is no doubt that it was prehistoric, for a large cedar tree with 360 annual rings was found growing on the highest point of the mound, on top of the walls before excavation began. This tree sprouted as far back as 1540, or the time the discoverer of the Southwest, Coronado, first entered what is now southern New Mexico. The number of stones filling the rooms covered by the débris indicates that the walls were formerly considerably higher and had fallen before the tree began to grow. If restored to their former place they would raise the wall six feet. The construction of this wall implies a time still further back. While the exact age can not be determined, the mound of débris would imply at least two centuries between laying the foundations and the sprouting of the cedar tree.

The purpose of the building is, and will remain, a mystery, but by elimination of theories which can not be accepted, the author believes it was a building devoted to ceremonials, or a temple. Unfortunately for all theories of use, the indications are that the walls were never finished. The rooms are not suitable for living rooms and the building shows no signs that it was intended for habitation. There are no indications of piles of débris, nor were utilitarian objects, like pottery, found in the rooms; no marks of smoke or plastering appear on the wall. It was never roofed. The theory that it was used solely for a fortification is equally unsatisfactory: there are no portholes, or places where its defenders might stand; no reservoir to supply water to warriors. Like the theory of defense, the suggestion that it was used for storage of food is likewise indefensible. Although protection and storage may have been secondary purposes, the shape of the rooms and their character implies that it was not primarily constructed for these ends. Not being able to accept any other theory, there remains but one other which strongly appeals to the author, which is that this large building was constructed for ceremonial uses. In support of this theory are mentioned certain large rooms, identified as kivas, which we know the cliff dwellers devoted to ceremonial rites. Similar rooms used for the same purpose survive in pueblos of the present day. Other reasons are advanced supporting the belief that this building was intended for a temple. The key to the whole structure, following this interpretation, is a shrine built on the corner-stone, under the southwest corner of the ruin. The symbolic figure on the floor of this shrine is a fossil palm leaf, identified as a representation of the sun, and suggesting the name, Sun Temple.

The question, Who built Sun Temple? is not less difficult to answer satisfactorily than those of its age and purpose. It has significant resemblance in architectural form to one of the great pueblo ruins in the Chaco Canyon, and the circular room of the annex with its surrounding chambers suggests the double walled "towers" found in the McElmo Canyon, and along the lower course of the Mancos River. There are deep-seated resemblances in the architectural and ceramic characters of these regions referred to which indicate that they belong to the same culture area, and it is possible that the center of diffusion of this culture was the Mesa Verde region. Although Sun Temple belongs to a type different from any of the well-known cliff dwellings of the Mesa Verde National Park, it shows evidences that it was not built by people from a distance but by inhabitants of the cliff houses of the Mesa Verde.

SCIENTIFIC ITEMS

We record with regret the death of Dr. C. Willard Hayes, formerly chief geologist of the U. S. Geological Survey; of Dr. John Orren Reed, professor of physics at the University of Michigan; of Dr. Oswald Külpe, professor of philosophy and psychology at Munich; of Dr. Richard Dedekind, professor of mathematics at Brunswick, and of Mr. A. D. Darbishire, lecturer on genetics in the University of Edinburgh.

The Bruce gold medal of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific has been awarded to Dr. George Ellery Hale, director of the Mount Wilson Solar Observatory.